HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

VOL. VI . No. 9 September 1985

MASTERS OF VERSATILITY: THE AMERICAN NEGRO PATRIOT

"A person who loves and loyally or zealously supports his own country." This is how WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY defines "patriot." But as simple as this definition would appear to be, for a person to be identified as a patriot calls for some subjective judgement. What does it mean, for example, for one to love his or her country? In this context, what does it mean to be loyal? During the United States' war against the people of Viet Nam, There were people who claimed love for and loyalty to this country and supported the war. Likewise, there were people who claimed love for and loyalty to this country but who were opposed to the war. Among those persons taking a pro-war position, there were those who actually believed that "we" were "fighting for the freedom of the VietNamese people" and there were those who simply had a view in which "America, right or wrong" formed the basis of what they perceived to be patriotism. Among those who were opposed to the war, some felt that the war was wrong on moral and ethical grounds, while some were of the opinion that the war was simply counter-productive to what they saw, very pragmatically, as desirable foreign policy objectives.

Clearly there were people whose positions did not fall neatly into the above-mentioned categories. Nonetheless, the point is that the determination as to whether a given person is a patriot is dependent upon how we happen to believe a person's love for and loyalty to his or her country are

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MINORITY RULE IN AZANIA-RALLY IN NE.

On Monday, September 2nd, about fifty people gathered at Bryant Center at 24th & Burdette to listen to various speakers address the issue of Caucasian minority rule in Azania(the name used by the Pan-Africanist Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement for the country of "South Africa"). Aside from the education and inspiration which the listeners got from the talks, this particular rally was the first such event to be held on the Azanian question in Omaha's African community. A prior rally had been held some weeks before in the Central Park Mall in Omaha's downtown district.

Speakers at the Bryant rally included Waliyy Hakeem, Vickey Parks, State Senator Ernest Chambers(who introduced this nation's first state divestiture law), and others. Not only did the Sisters and Brothers in attendance get information about apartheid(pronounced "apartate") but heard parallels made between the dejure system of racism under the South African government and the de facto system of racism in the U.S., the two nations' imprisonment of political dissidents, etc. The rally was preceded by a march. While the attendance at both events was small, enthusiasm was great.

Also In This Issue:

FROM OTHER SOURCES(C.I.A. In Ghana, Food Production Problems in Tanzania, Involvement of Women in Azanian Struggle For Self-Determination, Neighbors Support MOVE, Lock-down at Marion Prison)

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most appropriately expressed. In addition to the perceived and self-perceived "patriotism," as framed by the concepts of "loyalty" and "love," there is the question of what one's country is. A nation is, afterall, more than land and the buildings on it. A nation is a political entity, one that represents a particular set(s) of ideas, ideals, and which consitutes a specific set of conditions or realities. In addition, a nation is the culmination of its history.

The United States, due to its history and the present effects of that history, represents more than one set of ideas, ideals, and realities. For the so-called "indians," the only people in the U.S. who are truly native to this land, America is a long-standing thief, a foreign occupier. For Africans, so-called "black Americans," America is a kidnapper. For Chicano(a)s, America is a thief. It is only for the Caucasian middle, upper-middle, and wealthy classes that America represents such a grand ideal as the "land of the free and home of the brave," though many among those Caucasians who have lost high-paying jobs over the past five or six years may have come to see the illusory nature of the "Grand Ideal." To put this in another fashion, residents of Beverly Hills live in a far different America from residents of, for instance, the Cabrini Green housing projects in Chicago.

When we compare the conditions under which most Caucasians in the U.S. live with those under which the majority of this nation's African population live, it is clear that, from a material standpoint, Caucasians have much more reason to be patriotic than do Africans. But this is not merely a matter of a comparison of physical and psychological living conditions. It is also a matter of history. While most Caucasians in America are descended from Europeans who came to this land voluntarily, practically all African folks here are descended from men and women who were forcibly snatched from Africa and brought to this land in the hulls of slave ships. For African citizens of the United States to love the United States, and be loyal to it, is equivalent to the chicken loving the fox. And while that might be admirable, from the point of view of those who admire gluttons for punishment, it is, above all else, foolhardy and absurd.

"One's country" is both a state and a state of mind. Is the United States our country because we happen to live here? Is it our country because we have paid for our living here with our suffering and our very lives? There is no question but that the minority of Caucasians who run this place owe us something. But they can not give us this land because it is not their's to give. This land belongs to the Sioux, to the Cherokee, the Iroquois, Crow, Arapaho, and the other groups indigenous to it.

This land-as-political-entity we cannot even identify with. Not only does it disrespect us in the domestic arena, but, in the arena of foreign policy, it typically disrespects people of color around the world. It is opposed to the interests of those people whose foreparents are our foreparents. The United States is the friend of the South African government, is attempting to overthrow the Angolan government by giving support to the South Africa-backed UNITA rebels, invaded and occupied Grenada.

Yet, despite all this, there are those Africans in this country - living proof of the validity of Frantz Fanon's concept of the "Black Face/White Mask" - who view this nation and perceive its interests through the eyes of the thieves and kidnappers who run it. We see these negroes in auditoria singing the national anthem; waving American flags at track meets; appearing on television as supporters of the likes of Ronald Reagan, Jerry Falwell(Elmer Fudd), and other such champions of righteousness; and, in general, playing(?) slave to a master whose house is burning down and crying out, "our house is burning."

When two hold the stick and yours is the shorter end, it so much easier to pretend.

--Editor

From Other Sources

C.I.A. In Ghana

"For many Ghanaians, the arrest of former CIA clerk Sharon Scranage, who once worked at the U.S. Embassy in Accra, only confirmed long-standing suspicions that the agency had been actively trying to influence events in their country. But whenever the Ghanaian government had complained of CIA activity, noted a recent commentary by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, it had been assured that 'nothing of the sort is going on.'

"Scranage was arrested on July 11, just two months after returning from a two-year stint as a clerk in Accra. She is accused of passing names of intelligence agency operatives and Ghanaians who cooperate with the CIA to her Ghanaian lover, Michael Agbotui Soussoudis, a relative of Head of State Jerry Rawlings. Soussoudis was arrested in Washington on the same day.

On August 12, Scranage pled guilty to two counts of identifying a U.S. intelligence agent and not guilty to 16 other charges, including espionage. Soussoudis, who has denied working for Ghanaian intelligence but has said he is related to Rawlings, also appeared in District Court in Washington and pled not guilty to the espionage charges against him.

"Richard D. Mahoney, in J.F.K.: ORDEAL IN AFRICA(published by Oxford University Press in 1983), says Komla Gbedemah, one of Nkrumah's top aides, 'had no problem in obtaining CIA backing for his conspiracy' in 1961 and 'spent as much time plotting with the CIA station chief in Accra as he did with other Ghanaian conspirators.' Mahoney gives as his source confidential interviews with a Ghanaian CIA operative and a senior CIA officer in the U.S. embassy.

"The group of military officers who overthrew Nkrumah in February of 1966 also received CIA assistance, according to John Stockwell, whose 12-year career with the CIA included three tours in Africa.

"In a statement on the Scranage/Soussoudis case last month, the Ghana Information Ministry recounted an incident in February of 1983 when 'a group of dissident soldiers were surprised in the house of a Dr. Antwi,' while distributing weapons for a coup attempt. The ministry reported that 'a U.S. embassy vehicle, CD 251, appeared on the scene and whisked away' Dr. Antwi's American contact. The U.S. denied any involvement, the statement said."

--Excerpted from an article appearing on page 6 of the August 26 edition of AFRICA NEWS

Tanzanian Harvest

"The rain that fell on drought-stricken Tanzania in recent weeks may be sufficient for producing reserve stocks of crops--perhaps even enough to export. But according to THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR it will be all for naught unless the government and farmers are able to meet a dire shortage of storage facilities and transportation for the expected harvest. In the Arusha region, for example, storage depots are inadequate and 40% of the vehicles need spare parts for operation. Even with repairs, harvesting could still be hampered by a shortage of fuel."

--Excerpted from the "Bits & Pieces" section(back cover) of the August 26 edition of AFRICA NEWS

Azanian Women

"Women are considered 'minors' under apartheid. This means they could travel freely within their country because they did not have passes until 1956 when the Pass Act was implemented. Ex-Chief Albert Luthuli, a black South African who won the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize, observed how this Act became a catalyst for thousands of women to protest. He

says, 'It was the Government threat to subject women to the provisions of the pass system which set them moving. This brought them into Congress in large numbers around the time of the Defiance Campaign. Their opposition gathered strength, and led in 1956 to a massive demonstration in Pretoria, the administrative capital. Women from every corner of the Union took part, some of them travelling a thousand miles to be there. It is worthy of note, too, that this was an all-race demonstration...'

"The demonstration in Pretoria was the first large demonstration prompted by women in South Africa. Since then, women have continued to be an integral part of the struggle for liberation. 1958 was a year of widespread demonstrations by African women all over the Union. Towards the end of October the activity of women led to a mass rally in Johannesburg resulting in the arrest of over 2,000 women.

"Many of those arrested were jailed or sent to work camps. One woman, Dorothy Nyembe, has become a symbol of the courage and resilience of South African Women of color. She was jailed in 1969 for her political activity--specifically for harboring freedom fighters--and was released March of last year. In 1977 Dorothy was awarded a medal by the Central Committee of the National Front of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia(the medal commemorated the 30th anniversary of the defeat of fascism in May 1945). She was also honored by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization for her work on the potato boycott in the 50's..."

--Excerpted from an article on page 4 of the Spring/Summer edition of IOWA IDEA

(Note: "Union" in this passage refers to the Union of South Africa. "Congress" probably refers to the African National Congress, a leading instrument in the fight of African people in Azania against minority rule by Caucasians.)

Lockdown At Marion

"Prisoners at Marion(federal prison in Marion, Illinois) have been locked down in their cells since October 1983. In addition to being locked in the cells 23 hours a day, prisoners have been beaten, subjected to finger probes of the rectum, denied access to legal materials and denied contact family visits for 22 months. The courts are considering a lawsuit challenging the legality of the lockdown, and congressional hearings have been held regarding the conditions and abuse at the prison.

"In June a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee held its second hearing on Marion, following an investigation of the prison by two consultants appointed by the subcommittee.

"What was incredible about the hearing, said Baker(David Baker of the prisoners task force), was the panel's refusal to hear testimony by a former Marion prison guard David Hale, who was willing to confirm the beatings and ongoing abuse at the prison."

--Excerpted from an article on page 2 of the August 21 edition of THE GUARDIAN

MOVE Gets Support

"Working through the block association, they(neighbors of MOVE members in Philadelphia) called a news conference... It read in part: 'We the concerned neighbors of 56th. St. have followed the MOVE situation since Powelton Village(the police attack in '78) and have watched with outrage the massacre on Osage Avenue, and now Mayor Goode is threatening similar action against a MOVE sympathizer's house...We will not be used as an excuse for further attacks against MOVE. We have no problem with the MOVE house, they are a welcome member of our street just as anyone else. The only problem we have is with the police watching the MOVE house as well

as neighborhood people, and leaving uncertainties. We have also been subjected to low-flying helicopters, causing more tension within our neighborhood.'

"The press conference was attended by the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, the major daily; the TRIBUNE, the Black biweekly; radio station WXPN; and RW.....They said that the thing that prompted the press conference was the helicopter incident and the city's threat to shut off MOVE's water. The shutoff tactic was exposed as having preceded the confrontation in '78 and before the Osage Avenue massacre. They said they didn't want any part of any action against the MOVE sympathizers living there and that if police tried to take them to jail they would not allow it, and the majority on the block would go to jail with them....When asked what they wanted to come out of the news conference, the neighbors demanded that the mayor remove the police from the block and come to the neighborhood to personally guarantee that no action would be taken against MOVE and that there would be no confrontation in the neighborhood. One woman agreed with that but also said that there had been guarantees before Powelton and before Osage and that she doubted the mayor coming to the neighborhood would mean much--promises of no promises."

--Excerpted from an article which appears on page 2 of the August 26 REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

We apologize for the lateness of the August edition of the FLAME. Around the middle of October, AFRICAN POETS IN NE.

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$6 PER YEAR

Send money order, payable to "Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization," to:

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RECOMMENDED BOOKS

PART OF MY SOUL WENT WITH HIM(due for publication in November 1985 by W.W. Norton) - The story of Winnie Mandela, wife of Nelson Mandela and revolutionary activist in her own right. This book, authored by Sister Mandela, is edited by Anne Benjamin.

NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM by Nelson Mandela(Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1965)

APARTHEID: SOUTH AFRICAN NAZIISM by Sipo E. Mzimela(Vantage Press, Inc., 1983) - An excellent historical analysis of the apartheid system, its origins, and the characteristics and foundations which it shares with nazi-ism.

ANCIENT BLACK YOUTH AND ELDERS REBORN edited by Linda Cousins with an introduction by Mae Jackson(The Universal Black Writer Press, 1985) - While this anthology primarily consists of poems and statements by children, it also contains poems, short stories, and oral histories of elderly folks, as well as a couple of interviews. To quote from Linda Cousin's forward:

"Dedicated to the great Queen Mother Moore, the indefatigable Mrs. Thelma B. Moore, the illustrious Mr. Huey Long, and to the memory of Mr. Bertrand Knight, the elder griot and contributor, who entered the other side of Life while this book was in progress. This work is also dedicated to all of our great ancestors, as well as present-day elders who were once our ancient African youth; and to the blossoming African-descended youth of today who must and will grow in wisdom to be the great reborn elders of coming centuries."

Note: For further information on ANCIENT BLACK YOUTH..., write to The Universal Black Writer Press; P.O. Box 5; Radio City Station; N.Y., N.Y.; 10101-0005

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. Editor/W.M.E. we Langa

AFRICAN POETS IN NEBRASKA

VOL. II

In October of this year, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will publish this second special poetry edition of our monthly newsletter. We are accepting submissions at this time. We are looking for poems that are imaginative, well-crafted, powerful, poems by African(African-born, American-born, or otherwise) people that will serve to stimulate the minds and spirits of African people. Please enclose with your submissions a stamped self-addressed envelope.

DEADLINE: September 20th

"Sound the bells from the tops of temples,
Strike the tempo for a thousand
church choirs,
Echo the message through corridors of ivy
covered schools;
Let all knowing and believing people
who have endured
Hear and rejoice in the rebirth
Of our collective pride in our
experience, and
The Heritage" --Satiafa

Send Submissions To:

African Poets In Nebraska Vol. II

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